## **Service Planning and Transportation Access**

Incorporating basic transportation planning tools in the development of consumer services and program facilities on the front end helps create transportation options that will maximize consumers' mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel, improve air quality and thus promote a healthier environment.

In Massachusetts, recent transportation reform legislation and the Healthy Transportation Compact are just two examples of the Commonwealth's commitment to ensuring transportation access to services for all its residents.

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is committed to a healthy transportation policy and sustainable development principles that, within existing resources, ensure access to the most appropriate, safe and cost-effective transportation services for persons with mobility challenges. In today's fiscal environment, it is even more critical to actively promote and implement these policies. In addition to state agencies, community providers and consumers themselves play an important role in developing healthy and sustainable transportation options.

The HST Office suggests the following strategies and protocols:

**Site location planning** – Before establishing, relocating or expanding a program facility make every effort to find sites that are pedestrian and public transit accessible. The vast majority of the Commonwealth's public transit systems are now accessible to persons with disabilities.

- Locate facilities within walking distance of residential areas and within the transit service area.
- Call the local Transit Agency in your area and explain that you are planning a change in your program's location and would like to get a list of the existing transit/bus routes and any anticipated changes on those routes. If you are told that there are no changes planned at the present time, ask when the next review will occur and to be placed on the notification list for any public hearing or notice
  - o Find your local transit agency: <u>tinyurl.com/HST-RTAs</u>
- Contact the Regional Planning Agency for your metropolitan area. They will be aware of long-term changes and trends in regional services. They are a good source of information about public transit services as well as local roads and highway projects.
  - o Find your regional planning agency: tinyurl.com/HST-RPAs
- Using the public transit route information, look for space that is either on or within ¾ miles of an existing transit route. If you cannot find a facility located on or within ¾ miles of a fixed route service, ask the transit authority to consider altering its existing routes to serve your proposed facility at their next planned review. In the meantime try to coordinate with others around your location to establish a shuttle, or look into other agency programs where you might be able to share resources or services.
- If the building is not on an existing transit route, ask the Transit Authority if there are any barriers to the establishment of a route that would serve your facility (e.g., is there adequate space to maneuver a bus and/or paratransit vehicle?)
- For paratransit vehicles or agency contract vehicles serving a site, you must ensure that there is a safe and accessible area available for vehicles to load and discharge consumers and for the consumers to enter and exit the site.

**Consumer Intake Process** – Consider the consumer's transportation needs and options before developing a service plan. Look for services that are within the consumer's local community, ideally within walking distance and/or accessible to public transit.

- Find out if the consumer lives on or within \(^3\)4 miles of an existing public transit route.
- Also, find out if the consumer has ever received any travel training for using public transportation and if not, determine if the consumer would be a good candidate for travel training.
- Determine what, if any, equipment needs the consumer has in transit (e.g., wheelchair, oxygen, etc.)
- Authorize trip sharing with paratransit riders and consumers from other agencies, whenever clinically appropriate.
- Consider the travel time and cost implications when identifying services not within the consumer's local community or accessible by public transit.

**Program scheduling** – Especially for human service programs that have specialized transportation services, it is helpful to be flexible on program start and end times (peak hours are generally 7 to 9 AM and 3 to 5 PM) to minimize peak travel demand and congestion. Try to coordinate with other local programs to facilitate sequential and shared use of vehicles. This coordination also helps facilitate a more organized and timely response when facilities close early due to snow emergencies

**Consumer Contracted Transportation – Information & Technical Assistance –** For more information, visit EOHHS Human Service Transportation Office website at <a href="www.mass.gov/hst">www.mass.gov/hst</a> or email HSTInfo@state.ma.us.

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